

POINT OF VIEW

FRED MARTIN: ART AND HISTORY

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL

"How may I reach the mythic world?" A little after 3:00 on the afternoon of May 6, 1978, wearing headphones and lying on my back in a dark room, I sent this question out "everywhere into the furthest reaches of my expanded consciousness." The purpose of the following is to tell how I got there on the floor of that room in a Mill Valley medical center, why I asked the question, and what the answers were.

During most of 1975 and '76, I concentrated all of my attention as an artist on creating *A Travel Book*, published by Arion Press in San Francisco in November, 1976. By January of 1977, I was ready for new experiences, new things to see and hear and think about, and I remembered the Monroe Institute of Applied Sciences, which a friend had told me would provide the experience of timelessness not as an esthetic speculation as in my book but as an experiential fact. Motivated chiefly by curiosity and the need for new adventures, but also by the need to reestablish my connection with the mythic world to which art had always been my access and which had been summed up and also at least for a time closed off by completion of the *Travel Book*, I contacted the Institute.

My "Gateway Weekend" with the Monroe Institute was in March, 1977. It was a stupendous revelation to me of whole new continents of the mythic and my place in them, and these new worlds were revealed with an immediacy and power far beyond any artistic techniques I had ever found for similar purposes. This power continued during the following spring and summer, but has seemed to fade during the year since. Often I have seen this fading in a negative light, but there is also a positive aspect to it, because now that the impact of novelty has faded and the experiences have been more fully integrated into the general patterns of my life, I can write of them publicly, as here. In fact, it seems to me that the fading might well mean not that the techniques and the resultant materials are only insubstantial dreams, but rather that the core of the work has become so deeply entrenched in my mental processes that I no longer notice how really novel it is.

Early in my work with the Monroe system, I learned that there were three related types of consciousness developed in the training, called Focus 10, 12 and 15. I found that Focus 10 is the consciousness wherein clairvoyance, telepathy, psychic healing and veridical out of body

experiences take place. It is the psychic world typified by the work of a tribal shaman. I found that Focus 12 is the realm of the mythic, of the mythopoeia of certain writers and artists; and I found Focus 15 to be the realm of union with the One that is the goal of all mystic contemplation. In searching my mind and the available literature of the psyche and the spirit for appropriate terms for what aspect of oneself it is that engages each of these realms, it has come to seem that Focus 10 is the realm (or, as they used to say, "plane") of the "etheric body," Focus 12 is that of the soul, and Focus 15 is that of the spirit. (Please remember that these are my categorizations and terms for the states as I experienced them. Others who have worked with the system have found them somewhat different, and so have I from time to time.)

In the beginning of my work with the method, I made the layman's survey of the available scientific literature on parapsychology, and became convinced that parapsychological phenomena are real, occasional phenomena that lie outside our contemporary scientific paradigm. I also became convinced that they are probably not common enough or important enough socially to bring about a paradigmatic shift or to initiate the scientific revolution so many parapsychologists desire. I reviewed some of the literature on hypnosis because I felt that hypnosis and post-hypnotic suggestion followed by self-hypnosis were extremely important techniques in the Monroe system. The literature confirmed my feeling. The phenomenon of "frequency following response" which the Monroe system uses to induce narrow-band, high amplitude, broadly synchronized alpha rhythms in the brain, I had already encountered at the base of various methods of meditation on mantras and yantras, as well as being at the core of Jung's analysis of alchemy as a method of meditation on chemical reactions symbolized in philosophical/religious modes.

I looked through the OBE literature, which seemed to be all concerned with either seeing Aunt Mary in a house on the other side of town and then finding she was actually there, or else proving the survival of the human personality after death. I looked through the "astral" literature because it seemed more concerned with travel to the mythic realm which was my original goal. As the scientific OBE and clairvoyance literatures were fatally compromised in my eyes with the desire for a veridical proof which is contradictory to the nature of myth, so the astral

literature was tainted and almost destroyed by the rotting bones in it of myths long dead, jumbled together in the mass grava of myth that is contemporary occultism.

I have been working with the Monroe system now for a year and a half. The specific results have been that Focus 10 has become an area of great use as far as maintaining a high psycho-physical energy level is concerned, but the rest of its practical applications, though real, are of no great importance to me. Focus 15 has come to life only a few times and then in mythic guise. But Focus 12, the goal of all my efforts and once so bright with promise, has seemed to fade until it happened last May that lying in a dark room with my eyes closed, my brain filled with a beat intended to initiate a frequency following response, in the midst of a Focus 12 exercise intended to apply the maximum energy of the unconscious to the solution of problems in the external world, I sent out into the furthest reaches of my expanded consciousness and waited for an answer, "How may I reach the mythic world?"

The exercise is constructed to bring three responses to any serious, life question. The three responses were: to work the work, to wear the mask and to dwell in the humble house on the hill. Each had for me the oracular character of a response from the I-Ching, and I think Focus 12 centers attention-awareness in that same general area of being. However, the I-Ching was made for great problems of war and world politics, while my answers came from and were meant to guide the small world of a personal life, a "humble house," and their interpretation, therefore, lies only in the actual living of the life itself. I know, however, that "to work the work" means to make art, and "to wear the mask" means I must wear the head of myth if I would make an art of myth. And as for the humble house on the hill, I have always felt the goal of life is to rise as high as one can, to look as far as one can and to know one is always so very much smaller than the great world one sees. □

DI SUVERO SCULPTURE INSTALLED IN D.C.
Isis, a monumental sculpture by Mark Di Suvero, will be dedicated on July 19 on its site at the plaza of the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. The work was commissioned by the Institute of Scrap Iron and Steel, Inc., to commemorate its fiftieth anniversary. Di Suvero completed the piece at his outdoor studio in northern California.